

Regional Water Strategies Public Exhibition 3



Submission Questionnaire

Lachlan Regional Water Strategy Challenges and shortlisted actions

The NSW Government is taking action to improve the resilience of water resources in the Lachlan region. The Lachlan Regional Water Strategy sets out a shortlist of proposed actions to help deliver healthy and resilient water resources for a liveable and prosperous region.

Your voice is important

This is your opportunity to let us know which actions you support and think should be implemented to help set the region up for the future.

This questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes to complete, and your response can remain anonymous if you wish (see question 7).

Questions marked with an asterisk (*) require an answer.

If you have any questions about the questionnaire, please email: regionalwater.strategies@dpie.nsw.gov.au

You can also provide feedback via [our submission platform](#).

1. Your details

* Email address:

* Name:

* Address:

* Contact phone number:

* **Do you identify as an Aboriginal person?** (select one)

Yes No Choose not to answer

* **Are you making this submission as an individual or as a representative of an organisation?** (select one)

Individual Organisation

2. Organisation or business details

If making this submission as a representative of an organisation, who do you represent? (select one)

Government (select one)

- Commonwealth
 New South Wales
 State other
 Local

Peak representative organisation (select one)

- Environment
 Industry
 Business group or business chamber
 Community
 Local Water Utility

Aboriginal organisation (select one)

- Yes
 No

Other (select and provide details) _____

N/A

3. Regional water challenges

We have identified **6 key water-related challenges** that are an immediate priority for the region. More detail about each regional challenge is available in the Consultation Paper.

1 Managing water resources during more extreme events for people, industry and the environment

Water management in the Lachlan is challenging due to the region’s variable climate and the extensive, low-gradient river system, which is subject to high system losses. Climate change is predicted to bring more extreme events (floods and droughts), warmer temperatures and higher evaporation, stressing the system and giving it less time to recover. Climate change will also likely bring more variable river flows and groundwater recharge rates, impacting water supplies to all water users, including towns and communities, industries and environmental water holders.

Droughts can limit the ability to deliver water to town off-take points and nationally significant wetlands at the end of the system. It can also result in multi-year low or zero water allocations to general security licence holders, which are mostly held by industry and environmental water managers. Towns and communities reliant on unregulated water sources could also experience greater risk of limited water supplies should unregulated streams experience more frequent low-flow or cease-to-flow periods.

2 Understanding flood risks to individuals, businesses and communities

The management of floods is an ongoing challenge for the Lachlan region. The region has experienced significant flood events over the past 122 years of observed records and the intensity of heavy flood producing rainfall events could increase under climate changing scenarios.

Given the flat landscape, many areas of the region are subject to flood risk. Development on the floodplain has meant that floods can significantly impact people and businesses, damage infrastructure, create safety risks and cause financial and economic loss. The devastating flood event in the Lachlan region in late 2022 highlighted the flooding risks to many communities in the region at an unprecedented and catastrophic scale.

But floods are also a vital natural process that support the region's ecosystems, providing benefits such as significant groundwater recharge and connections between rivers and their wetlands and floodplains, such as the Great Cumbung Swamp and Booligal Wetlands in the lower Lachlan River. Tributary flows downstream of the region's major headwater storages are often a major contributor to flooding in the region. Floods are also responsible for the productive soils valued by landholders on the Lachlan region's floodplains.

3 Improving water quality

Poor water quality has a direct impact on the health, wellbeing and resilience of all water users and is a prevalent risk in the Lachlan region.

Maintaining high water quality is a key challenge for the Lachlan region, as poor water quality impacts on ecological health, treatment costs for towns and industries and has an effect on Aboriginal people's wellbeing and connection to Country.

Dissolved oxygen can be depleted during hypoxic black water events and harmful algal blooms—often caused by excessive nutrients—can lead to the death of aquatic plants and animals. Unseasonal temperatures can also directly contribute to fish deaths and high turbidity can reduce the light penetrating of the water column and stress benthic plants. Salinity (both dryland and instream) can impact on vegetation leading to erosion and high turbidity, as well as increase salt loads beyond the tolerance level of some native plants and animals. Existing water infrastructure can also cause cold water pollution impacts which can reduce the range and abundance of native fish.

4 Addressing barriers to Aboriginal water rights

Aboriginal people in the Lachlan region have always been closely linked to rivers, creeks and groundwater sources, and their relationship to these water sources and wetlands is essential to culture, community and connection to Country.

Water management arrangements, a lack of water ownership, and poor access to waterways and culturally important sites restrict Aboriginal people from fulfilling their cultural obligation to care for Country and fail to provide opportunities for Aboriginal people in the Lachlan region. Involving Aboriginal people more closely in decision-making processes around water management could enrich and improve our water-management decisions and in turn provide employment and economic advancement opportunities for Aboriginal people, including youth.

5 Sustaining the health and resilience of the region's water-dependent ecosystems

The river system, floodplains, swamps, aquifers and wetlands in the Lachlan region provide habitat for many aquatic species, including birds and native fish. The lower Lachlan floodplain is home to 8 nationally important wetlands, which feature areas of valuable river red gum forest and woodlands, blackbox woodland, common reed and lignum. Our challenge is to sustain the health and resilience of these natural assets and ecosystems now and into the future.

Existing water infrastructure, river operations and water extraction, both surface and groundwater, have influenced flow variability, water quality and the distribution of water throughout the catchment. These factors are causing stress on native species and aquatic environmental health, especially at the end of the system.

Based on the new climate risk modelling, the Lachlan region could see more changes to river flows, magnifying the impacts on riverine and floodplain ecosystems. Improving lateral connectivity would support water quality, system-scale productivity and drought refugia as well as improve conditions for native species and aquatic fauna.

6 Supporting economic growth and diversification

The industry profile in the Lachlan region is changing. Over the next 20 years, food processing and agriculture, mining and renewable energy production is expected to expand – aided in parts by upgrades to roads, transport links and government investments in the Parkes Special Activation Precinct. Our challenge is to support new and existing industries in the context of a variable and changing climate.

A key focus for the Lachlan region is to provide conditions that make the region an attractive place to invest. Although industries have adapted to the region's climate, the variability in allocations to general security entitlements can create uncertainties and may deter new industries – including high value industries – from settling in the region.

New emerging industries and regional population growth will also likely create greater competition for available water resources, including groundwater. An increase in groundwater demand could push extraction close to (or above) the allowable limit and pose risk to the long-term sustainability of groundwater sources.

Do you agree that these are the key water challenges for the Lachlan region that we need to focus on? (select one)

Yes No

If no, please outline what you see as the key water-related challenges in this region over the next 20 – 40 years?

4. Addressing the challenges

We have developed 3 regional priorities with actions under each. We want to know which of the actions you support.

The regional priorities are:

- 1 Build resilience to climate extremes
- 2 Improve catchment health
- 3 Support a strong and sustainable economy in a capped system

Priority 1: Build resilience to climate extremes

The actions shortlisted under this priority will:

- build resilience through better integrating regional and local strategic water management activities and improved coordination regarding extreme events
- improve our hydrological modelling capabilities, including scoping a program of works to build a new model for the Upper Lachlan to investigate water security risks to towns and communities in the Upper Lachlan
- support Aboriginal people to be more involved in water management by better valuing their traditional knowledge and contributing to decision making
- improve our understanding of important groundwater sources and investigate opportunities to expand the existing regional water supply grid
- enhance the existing support provided by various State agencies to local councils with respect to flood risk management planning, through ongoing direct support and improved coordination
- improve the integration of strategic land and water planning.

Proposed action		Do you support this action?
1.1	Establish a coordination approach involving all levels of Government, to implement local council and town water-related actions under Priority 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
1.2	Support councils to improve flood risk management in the Lachlan region	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
1.3	Upgrade the existing hydrological models for the Lachlan catchment to better represent river operations and drought contingency measures	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
1.4	Develop ongoing arrangements for participation of local Aboriginal people in water management	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
1.5	Support groundwater use for towns and communities	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
1.6	Investigate water security for small and remote communities	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
1.7	Investigate the need to further expand the regional water supply grid	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
1.8	Improve the understanding and management of groundwater resources in the Lachlan	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
1.9	Better integrate strategic land and water planning	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

A) Do you have any comments on the proposed actions identified?

Priority 2: Improve catchment health

Actions under this category focus on:

- supporting natural resource management activities in the upper and lower Lachlan region
- addressing existing water quality issues in the region
- protecting important cultural assets and supporting co-benefit outcomes of the use of environmental water where feasible
- removing constraints and impediments to environmental water delivery
- update our floodplain management plans and address unapproved and non-compliant structures on floodplains.

Proposed action	Do you support this action?
2.1 Reduce salinity and soil erosion in the upper Lachlan and Belubula catchment	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
2.2 Protect and rehabilitate regionally significant riparian and instream habitats in the regulated Lachlan River	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
2.3 Upgrade and automate existing public re-regulating structures in the mid and lower Lachlan to build the functional resilience of critical ecosystems	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
2.4 Mitigate the impact of water infrastructure and disruption of natural flows on native fish	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
2.5 Review and evaluate the Lake Brewster Water Efficiency Project	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
2.6 Support place-based initiatives to deliver cultural outcomes for Aboriginal people	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
2.7 Support the development and implementation of the Lachlan Floodplain Management Plan and address floodplain structures	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

A) Do you have any comments on the proposed actions identified?

Priority 3: Support a strong and sustainable economy in a capped system

Actions shortlisted under this priority focus on:

- facilitating access to data and information to assist industry to better assess risks and develop mitigation strategies
- exploring water use and water demand of the region’s industries and their resilience to a more variable and changing climate
- advancing economic opportunities for Aboriginal people and developing culturally appropriate placed-based initiatives
- improving our hydrological modelling capabilities to pursue further analysis on a range of infrastructure options that could improve system efficiencies and enhance reliability in the region.

Proposed action		Do you support this action?
3.1	Improve public access to climate information and water availability forecasts	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
3.2	Investigate water use in the Lachlan region	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
3.3	Undertake a climate impact study	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
3.4	Support employment and business opportunities for Aboriginal people in the Lachlan region	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
3.5	Support system water delivery efficiency measures	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

A) Do you have any comments on the proposed actions identified?

5. Other comments

A) Should any proposed actions in this second consultation document not be shortlisted and why?

B) Should any other options in this second consultation document be shortlisted and why?

6. Implementation of the Lachlan Regional Water Strategy

An Implementation Plan will be included in the final Lachlan Regional Water Strategy.

A) Which actions should be implemented first and why?

Making your submission public

To promote transparency and open government, we intend to make all submissions publicly available on our website, or in reports. Your name or your organisation's name may appear in these reports with your feedback attributed.

If you would like your submission and/or feedback to be kept confidential, please let us know when making your submission.

If you request that your submission is to be kept confidential, it will not be published on our website or included in any relevant reports; however, it will still be subject to the *Government Information Public Access Act 2009*.

Your submission will be stored securely, consistent with the department's Records Management Policy and you have the right to request access to, and correction of, your personal information held by the department.

Further details can be found in our privacy statement available on our website.
www.industry.nsw.gov.au/privacy

7. Information on confidentiality and privacy *

I give permission for my submission to be publicly available on the NSW Department of Planning and Environment website.

Yes No

I would like my personal details to be kept confidential.

Yes No

8. Would you like to be kept updated on progress on the development and implementation of the Lachlan Regional Water Strategy?

Yes No

If yes, please provide your details below.

* Email address:

* Name:

* Address:

* Contact phone number:

9. How did you hear about the Public Exhibition of this strategy?

We are interested to know how you heard about the opportunity to make a submission. Please indicate the communication methods below:

- Newspaper
- Radio
- Department of Planning and Environment website
- Direct email
- Social media
- Have your say NSW Government website
- Communication from peak body
- Word of mouth
- Other (select and provide details) _____

10. Additional Information

If you would like to provide any supporting documents to help us understand your feedback, please email these from the same email you provided in this form or attach supporting documents to this form if you are returning your submission by mail.

All submissions on the draft Lachlan Regional Water Strategy will be reviewed following the public exhibition period.

Please email your completed submission and any supporting documents to:

regionalwater.strategies@dpie.nsw.gov.au

Or post to:

Regional Water Strategies
Department of Planning and Environment
Locked Bag 5022
Parramatta NSW 2150

Submissions close Sunday 12 November 2023, 11.59pm

Further details on all regional water strategies can be found on our website
www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/regional-water-strategies



Thank you for your submission.